# SPEECH

OF

# SIR WILLIAM MOLESWORTH, BART. M.P.

IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,

ON

TUESDAY, 25TH JUNE, 1849,

FOR

## A ROYAL COMMISSION

TO

## INQUIRE INTO THE ADMINISTRATION

OF

## THE COLONIES.

LONDON:
JAMES RIDGWAY, PICCADILLY.

[PRICE ONE SHILLING.]

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M719

LONDON:
RICHARDS, 100, ST. MARTIN'S LANE.

# SPEECH,

ETC. ETC.

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Petition from New Zealand.

SIR,—Before I ask the House to consider the motion which I intend to make, I wish to present a petition which I received yesterday from Wellington, in New Zealand. It is signed by a large portion of the adult population of that settlement. The petitioners state that their reasonable expectations of obtaining representative institutions have been disappointed, that their governor has established a form of government repugnant to their feelings, and inefficient for good government; and they pray that Parliament will not sanction any measure which will delay the introduction of representative government into the southern settlements of New Zealand. I heartily support the prayer of this petition: because I believe, that the petitioners are in every way well qualified to enjoy representative institutions; and that with representative institutions, New Zealand would soon become one of the greatest and most flourishing colonies of the British empire.

Motion for inquiry.

I now proceed to move that an humble address be presented to her Majesty, praying that her Majesty will be graciously pleased to appoint a commission to inquire into the administration of her Majesty's colonial possessions. I make this motion because I share in the belief which now prevails, that our system of colonial government is in many respects faulty, and ill-suited to the present state of Great Britain and of the colonies. Therefore, I maintain that it requires revision; and for the purpose of revision I ask that a searching inquiry should be made into the colonial polity of the British empire. With the permission of the house, I will state, as briefly as I can, what, in my opinion, should be the nature of the inquiry, and to what subjects it should be directed. But first, in order to satisfy the house that there ought to be an inquiry, I will endeavour to show what has produced the general conviction, that there are grave errors and defects in our colonial polity.

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Colonial polity.

What I mean by the term "colonial polity of Great Britain" is of recent date, not more than three quarters of a century old. For, when we began to colonize, the Government had little or nothing to do with it, and, strictly speaking, there was no colonial polity. Our first colonies were planted by adventurers, who left this country for various reasons; some in search of the precious metals; others to escape from intolerance at home; and others to enjoy intolerance abroad. They settled on the shores of America with the nominal sanction of the Crown. Fortunately for them, civil conflicts in England, and the weakness of the Executive, left them for many years unmolested in full enjoyment of virtual independence. They flourished; their numbers increased rapidly; they became wealthy and powerful. Meanwhile, the Executive in this country gradually acquired strength; its attention was directed to the prosperity of the colonies; it attempted systematically to interfere in their government; the colonies resisted; some rebelled and became independent; the remainder submitted; and the present

Its origin.

system of colonial government was founded upon the ruins of our old colonial empire. By far the greater portion of our modern colonial empire is of recent acquisition; all of it, with the exception of the plantations in the West Indies, and two or three old colonies in North America, has been acquired within the last ninety years, most of it within the last fifty years; for instance, the Canadas in 1759; Trinidad and other West Indian islands, Ceylon, and New South Wales, in the interval between 1763 and 1797; the rest of

Modern colonial empire.

Australasia, New Zealand, the whole of South Africa, British Guiana, the Mauritius, Malta, the Ionian Islands, Heligoland, Hong Kong, and Labuan, are not (as the noble lord the prime minister once called them) precious inheritances from our noble ancestors, but have been added to the British dominions since the beginning of this century. These colonies have been acquired for various reasons. Some we conquered because we grudged the possession of them to rival powers, and fancied that the might of a nation was in proportion to the extent of its territory; others we held as outposts, on the plea of protecting our own trade, and injuring the trade of other countries; and others we occupied as places of punishment for our criminals. Thus our colonial empire consisted chiefly of conquered provinces, garrison towns, and gaols.

System of government.

Their government was entrusted to a central authority in England. The invariable tendency of such an authority is to grasp as much power as possible, and to resist every measure which seems likely either directly or indirectly to

diminish that power. In conformity with these tendencies the colonial polity of Great Britain was framed; and the Colonial-office laid claim to omnipotence and infallibility in all matters concerning the colonies. That claim was long recognized in this country, and scarcely disputed in the colonies. But of late years it has been contested not so much within as without the walls of this house; and every colony has repeatedly and energetically protested against it; and now the conviction is daily gaining ground throughout the empire, that our colonial system is not well suited either to the state of Great Britain or of the colonies.

Belief that it is faulty.

The conviction that our colonial polity is faulty has acquired strength in this country in proportion as public opinion has been more and more directed to colonial questions, and of late years greater attention has been paid to those questions for various reasons. First, because within the last quarter of a century Great Britain has begun again to colonize, and on a much greater scale than ever before. For, during that period, at least 2,000,000 of persons have migrated from this country; half of them have gone directly to our independent colonies of the United States; the other half to our dependent colonies, whence a large portion of them have re-emigrated to the United States. This great emigration, though chiefly directed to our independent colonies, has made the subjects of colonization and colonial government matters of deep and increasing interest to a large portion of the community, especially to the humbler and middling classes: for there is scarcely one amongst them who has not some acquaintance, friend, or relation in one of the Colonies or about to emigrate; and also many of the aristocracy and gentry have friends or kinsmen residing in the colonies as governors, or in other situations of trust and profit. In consequence of this great emigration, the relations between Great Britain and her dependencies have been profoundly changed; and there ought to have been a corresponding change in her colonial polity, which was framed without reference to any emigration except that of convicts.

Increasing attention to colonial questions.

Great emigration.

Secondly, public attention has been very much directed of late years to colonial questions by the writings of distinguished men, who have carefully investigated the economy of new societies, examined into the principles of colonial government, and attentively studied the subjects of colonization and emigration, with the view of relieving the economical difficulties of the United Kingdom and of planting the uninhabited portions of the globe with communities worthy of the English name. Of these writers, Mr. Wakefield is

Writings of distinguished men.

Writings of Mr. Wakefield.

the most eminent; by his writings he produced a profound impression on the minds of some of the ablest men of our day, as, for instance, John Mill, Grote, and others; and there are few persons in this country, who have paid much attention to colonial questions, who will not readily acknowledge, even when they do not adopt all Mr. Wakefield's conclusions, that they are deeply indebted to that gentleman for a considerable portion of their most valuable knowledge of matters relating to the colonies.

Discussions on Free trade and the Navigation laws.

Thirdly, public attention has been much directed of late years to colonial questions, in consequence of the discussions which have taken place with regard to free-trade and the navigation laws, and which have led to a great change in our commercial polity. For most of the statesmen of this country have maintained that there is an intimate connexion between the colonial and commercial polities of Great Britain. They have generally defended the acquisition of new colonies, on the plea, that such foreign possessions afforded markets for the exclusive benefit of our manufacturers, and produced a trade for the exclusive profit of our merchants and shipowners; and they persuaded the nation that, in return for these privileges, it was worth our while to pay vast sums of money for protecting and governing the colonies. These privileges being abolished, the question seems very naturally to arise, why are we to continue to pay for them? The colonies are free to trade with whom they will, and in what manner they will. Therefore, they will only trade with us and employ our shipping, when it is most profitable to them to do so. Therefore, as far as trade is concerned, they are become virtually independent states. And this revolution in our commercial polity has directed public attention to the question, whether there ought not to be a corresponding change in our colonial polity?

Events of the last fifteen years.

Fourthly, the attention of Parliament and of the country has of late years been constantly occupied with colonial questions, in consequence of a series of remarkable events in the colonies, which have annually occasioned heavy demands to be made on the public purse. In the course of the last fifteen years, the colonies have directly cost Great Britain at least 60,000,000*l.* in the shape of military, naval, civil, and extraordinary expenditure, exclusive of the 20,000,000*l.* which were paid for the abolition of slavery. Therefore, the total direct cost of the colonies has been at least 80,000,000*l.* in the last fifteen years. Now, if honourable members would merely take the trouble of recalling to their minds the chief events which were taking place in the colonies, whilst this

money was expending, they must at once admit, that the result of the expenditure has been far from satisfactory, either to the United Kingdom or to the colonies; and I think that they will likewise admit that there must be something essentially faulty in a polity which, at such an enormous cost, produces the results which I will briefly enumerate to the House. Events of the last fifteen years.

In the first place, in our North American dependencies, within the last fifteen years, there has been a conflict of races, ending in civil war; two rebellions—one in Upper Canada, one in Lower Canada, suppressed at great cost to this country; various constitutions destroyed or suspended; two hostile provinces united by means of intrigue and corruption; and now, it is said, I hope most untruly, that the war of races is about to be renewed; if this should happen, and should lead to civil strife and rebellion; and if Great Britain should, unhappily, attempt to suppress it by force of arms, that attempt, if successful, will cost many millions more than the former rebellion; for the rebels will be, not the poor ignorant habitans of Canada, but the fierce and energetic Anglo-Saxon population. North America.

Secondly, in the West Indies, within the last fifteen years, a proposal to lend fifteen millions, was converted into a gift of twenty millions, and followed by the universal ruin of the planters; in one colony (Jamaica) the constitution was proposed to be suspended; in another colony (British Guiana) the supplies were stopped; and now again in British Guiana, and also in Jamaica, the supplies are stopped; in Santa Lucia there are insurrectionary riots; and in all the other sugar plantations there is discontent bordering on despair. The West Indies.

Thirdly, in South Africa, within the last fifteen years, perpetual border feuds with rapacious and warlike savages, whom the Colonial-Office, with characteristic ignorance, one time mistook for peaceful and harmless shepherds: with these savages two fierce wars, with lavish expenditure, enormous peculation, and no accountability; three rebellions of the Boers, ever striving in vain to escape from our hated tyranny, and preferring to dwell amidst wild beasts and wilder men, to the detested dominion of the Colonial-Office; and, finally, the acquisition of a huge, worthless, and costly empire, extending over nearly 300,000 square miles, chiefly rugged mountains, arid deserts, and barren plains, without water, without herbage, without navigable rivers, without harbours, in short, without everything except the elements of great and increasing expense to this country. South Africa.

Fourthly, in Ceylon, abuse of patronage, official inapti- Ceylon.

tude, and excessive expenditure; ignorance on the part of the Colonial Office augmenting financial embarrassment, and leading to injudicious taxes; riots and martial-law; military executions and punishments disgraceful to the British name.

Australasia. Fifthly, in Australasia, communities, the offspring of convict emigration, more hideously vicious than any recorded in sacred or profane history; that convict emigration one day abolished, to the joy of the colonists of Tasmania, the next day renewed, to their horror and amazement

New Zealand. Sixthly, in New Zealand, imbecile governors, discreditable functionaries, and unnecessary wars with the natives; unfortunately successful efforts to mar the fairest scheme of colonization, and to disappoint the hopes of the choicest emigrants; and, finally, a constitution proclaimed one day, and suspended the next.

Vancouver's Island. Seventhly, on the north-west coast of America, Vancouver's Island—but I will not weary the House with more on this subject. I will only beg the House to observe, that all these events, and many more of a similar character, have occurred in the course of the last fifteen years. In that short period of time, Great Britain has paid directly, as I have already said, at least 80,000,000*l.* on account of the colonies; a sum of money quite sufficient to have conveyed 4,000,000 emigrants to Australia, or the whole of the Celtic population of Ireland to North America; yet, at the present moment, all our colonial dependencies do not contain more than 1,500,000 persons of British or Irish descent (there are as many persons, by birth British subjects, in the United States at the present moment); and our export trade of produce and manufactures to all our subject colonies (including Gibraltar), does not exceed 9,500,000*l.* a year, or about 1,500,000*l.* less than our export trade, in 1847, to our independent colonies of the United States, which cost us nothing. Therefore, comparing the result of our colonial system with the cost, it can scarcely be denied, that the result, with regard to trade and emigration, has been paltry and insignificant; and that the most manifest consequences of our colonial polity have been wars, rebellions, recurring distress, general discontent, and enormous expenditure. Therefore, judging of the tree by its fruits, it is not unfair to infer that there are grave errors and defects in the colonial polity of the British empire. To this conclusion all our colonial fellow-subjects have long ago arrived; and a large portion both of the thinking and practical men of this country, are in the act of arriving. Our colonial polity has few defenders out of this House; no defenders in it, except official ones; for, whenever the honourable gentleman, the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, rises, and, with

Result of Colonial system.

matchless courage and dauntless determination, maintains that nothing can be more perfect than our colonial polity; that nothing can be more judicious than the conduct of the Colonial Secretary; and that nothing can be more praiseworthy than all the appointments made by his noble friend,—a solemn silence reigns around him, scarcely, if ever, interrupted by a faint cheer. For the House, reflecting on the history of the colonies since the year 1846, cannot fail to remember that many of the most important events to which I have just referred as indicating colonial mismanagement, have occurred since the present Secretary of State for the Colonies took office; for instance, the alleged renewal of the war of races in Canada; the stoppage of the supplies in British Guiana and Jamaica; the mismanagement of the Kafir war, with peculation, extravagant expenditure, and no accountability; the rebellion of the Boers, with the foolish extension of our empire in South Africa; the hasty transportation of convicts to the Cape of Good Hope; the strange ignorance of the financial condition of Ceylon, with its lamentable and disgraceful consequences; the abandonment and the renewal of transportation to Van Diemen's Land; the blunders about the constitution of New Zealand; and the transfer of Vancouver's Island to the Hudson's Bay Company,—the honour of all these events belongs to the administration of the present Secretary of State for the Colonies. Therefore public opinion can make no exception in his behalf when it condemns the colonial polity of Great Britain, distrusts the department that conducts that polity, and puts no faith in its recognized organs in either House of Parliament. Whether right or wrong, this notorious state of public opinion is dangerous, and much to be regretted. It forms one of my chief arguments for the inquiry which I propose to the House.

Administration of the present Colonial Minister.

Condemned by public opinion.

I think the House ought to assent to my motion, because, in fact, it is the legitimate sequel to various motions with reference to the colonies, which during this session have met with the favourable consideration of the House. I refer to the motion of the honourable gentleman the member for Inverness-shire, with regard to British Guiana and Ceylon; to that of the honourable gentleman the member for North Staffordshire, with regard to convict emigration to the Cape of Good Hope; and to that of the noble lord the member for Falkirk, with regard to Vancouver's Islands, which would have been carried but for a manœuvre. Each of these motions implied censure of something which had been lately done in the colonies; each of them met with the general approbation of the House; and each of them raised colonial

Motions of this session with regard to the colonies.

Motions of this session with regard to the colonies.

questions of great importance, well worthy of further consideration and of serious inquiry. In addition to these motions, which were virtually carried, two other motions condemnatory of our colonial polity have this session received the support of considerable minorities; I mean the motion of the honourable gentleman the member for Berwickshire, for a committee of inquiry into our colonial system, and the motion of the honourable gentleman the member for Sheffield, for leave to bring in a bill to amend that system; and also notices have been given of two other motions impugning portions of our colonial system, one by the honourable gentleman the member for Montrose, the other by the right honourable gentleman the member for the University of Oxford. These events indicate the state of public opinion with regard to our colonial polity; and that state of opinion existing in this House, throughout the country, and throughout the colonies, together with the events which have lately occurred in the colonies, appear to me to constitute good parliamentary grounds for the inquiry which I propose to the consideration of the House.

Indicate state of opinion.

I will now state what, in my opinion, should be the chief subjects of inquiry. They may be arranged under the three heads of Colonial Government, Colonial Expenditure, and Emigration or Colonization.

Heads of inquiry.

Colonial government.

First.—An inquiry should be made into our system of colonial government, with the view of removing the main causes of colonial complaint. Now, the one great cause of colonial complaint is irresponsible government from a distance. The faults inherent in our government of the colonies have been forcibly described in words which I will read to the House, and to which I am sure hon. gentlemen will listen with attention, in memory of a late distinguished member of this House. That system "has all the faults of an essentially arbitrary government, in the hands of persons who have little personal interest in the welfare of those over whom they rule; who reside at a distance from them; who never have ocular experience of their condition; who are obliged to trust to secondhand and one-sided information, and who are exposed to the operation of all those sinister influences which prevail wherever publicity and freedom are not established." The power of these persons "is exercised in the faulty manner in which arbitrary, secret, and irresponsible power must be exercised over distant communities. It is exercised with great ignorance of the real condition and feelings of the people subjected to it; it is exercised with that presumption, and, at the same time, in that spirit of mere routine, which are the in-

Faults of system.

herent vices of bureaucratic rule; it is exercised in a mischievous subordination to intrigues and cliques at home, and intrigues and cliques in the colonies. And its results are, a system of constant procrastination and vacillation, which occasions heart-breaking injustice to the individuals, and continual disorder in the communities subjected to it. These are the results of the present system of colonial government, and must be the results of every system which subjects the internal affairs of a people to the will of a distant authority not responsible to anybody." Results of system.

These were the words of my late friend, Mr. Charles Buller. They expressed his deliberate and unchanged convictions, and are deserving of the utmost respect; for no one had more carefully or more profoundly studied colonial questions, no one had brought greater talents to bear on those questions, no one was more anxious for the well-being of the colonies, no one was better qualified as a statesman to govern the colonies; and those who knew him well, and loved him, did fondly hope that the time would arrive when he would be placed in a position to be a benefactor to the colonies, and to make a thorough reform of the colonial system of the British empire. But, alas! Providence has willed it otherwise. Charles Buller.

Our colonial system is essentially the same as it was when Mr. Charles Buller wrote the words which I have just read. In reply to this assertion, the honourable gentleman the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies will in all probability boast again, as he has boasted before, that of our forty-three colonies, twenty-seven have had representative institutions conceded to them. But the honourable gentleman must acknowledge that, of these twenty-seven colonies, eight have only had the promise of representative institutions; and that the remaining nineteen had representative institutions long ago, when the noble lord, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, was an energetic assailer of Colonial-office government. In consequence of those assaults upon our colonial system, it was expected that, as soon as the noble lord came into office, he would hasten to bestow representative institutions on many colonies which were well deserving of them. But what has he accomplished, in this respect, during the last three years? He has imagined a nondescript constitution for New Zealand, and immediately suspended it; he then sent it to New South Wales for inspection, and New South Wales rejected it: having failed to reform the constitution of New South Wales, he now, at a late period of the session, introduces a bill to bestow the unreformed Representative institutions.

Representative institutions.

constitution of New South Wales upon the other Australian colonies; and finally, he has commissioned the renowned Sir Harry Smith, the great Inkosi Inkolu of the Kafirs, to devise a constitution for the Cape of Good Hope. I will not venture to anticipate the results of these measures. I hope and trust they will be productive of benefit to the colonies concerned; but, in order that they may be as beneficial as possible, I maintain that they ought to be accompanied by a thorough revision and reform of our colonial polity.

Rather shams than realities.

Under the existing colonial system, in most of our colonies (I may, indeed, say in all of them with the exception of Canada) representative institutions are rather shams than realities, for they seldom lead to the legitimate consequences of representative government, namely, responsible government according to the will of the majority of the representatives of the people. In almost all the representative colonies the Colonial-Office generally attempts to carry on the government by means of a minority of the representative assembly, with the assistance of a legislative assembly composed of the nominees of the Colonial-Office. The consequence is, a perpetual struggle between the majority of the Representative Assembly and the party of the Colonial-Office—a struggle carried on with an intensity of party hatred and rancour happily unknown to us—each party rejects or disallows the measures of the other party; thus legislation stands still, and enmity increases; after a time the supplies are stopped, and a dead lock ensues; then the Imperial Parliament is called on to take the part of the Colonial-Office, and a constitution is sometimes suspended; next, to preserve order or to put down rebellion, the military force is augmented; and, finally, a demand is made upon the purses of the British people, who have invariably to pay the piper at every colonial brawl. Within the last fifteen years events of this kind have taken place in most of our largest colonies; for instance, in both the Canadas, in Nova Scotia, Jamaica, and British Guiana; and they seem likely to be repeated in Jamaica and British Guiana. Thus both in the colonies which have representative assemblies, and in those which have them not, the one great cause of complaint is irresponsible government from a distance; that is, government by rulers who are necessarily ignorant of the state of their subjects; who, sometimes with the very best intentions, propose and insist upon the very worst measures. It would be easy to take colony after colony, and show in each a series of lamentable blunders which have been committed by the Colonial-Office. For instance, how the war of races was stimulated in Canada; how the ruin of

How they work.

Blunders of the Colonial-Office.

the planters was made inevitable in the West Indies; how a valuable portion of our fellow-subjects in South Africa were driven into the desert and became rebels; how the immorality of Van Diemen's Land was fearfully augmented; how the colonization of New Zealand was spoilt; how Vancouver's Island was thrown away—all through the ignorance, negligence, and vacillation of the Colonial-Office. Blunders of the Colonial-Office.

Ignorance, negligence, and vacillation are three inseparable accidents of our system of colonial government. Ignorance is the necessary consequence of the distance that intervenes between the rulers and the ruled; negligence is the invariable result of the want of efficient responsibility, and the responsibility of the Colonial-Office to Parliament is merely nominal, in consequence of the ignorance of Parliament with regard to colonial affairs. And whenever there is either ignorance or negligence, there vacillation must also exist. To illustrate these positions by events of recent occurrence, I will cite, as a case of negligence, the act of the 5th and 6th Victoria, c. 76, which was passed in 1842, for the purpose of bestowing a constitution on New South Wales. One of the chief objects of that act was to create district councils in that colony. Much importance was attached to the establishment of those councils, therefore great care ought to have been taken in framing the clauses with regard to them; on the contrary, there was the greatest negligence: when the act reached the colony, after a journey of six months, the Governor discovered that the 48th clause, which ought to have contained an important provision with regard to the district councils, was without assignable object or discoverable meaning—in fact it was utter jargon: the consequence was, that the district councils were still-born. Their premature decease is not to be regretted, for though they were favourite children of the present Secretary of State for the Colonies, they were begotten in ignorance of the wants aud feelings of the inhabitants of New South Wales. Vices inherent in system. Negligence.

As an instance of vacillation, I will cite the recent conduct of the Colonial Office with regard to transportation to Van Diemen's Land. The House may remember, that in 1846 it was discovered that a state of almost incredible immorality existed among the convicts of that colony, arising from the negligence and mismanagment of the Colonial Office and the colonial governor. The Colonial Office, therefore, determined to suspend transportation for two years, and sent a new governor to the colony, to improve the system of convict discipline prior to the renewal of transportation. A few months afterwards, in February 1847, the Colonial Office changed its Vacillation.

Vacillation.

mind, and announced to Parliament, that transportation to Van Diemen's Land was not to be renewed. This intelligence was received in the colony with the greatest joy and delight. Unfortunately, however, not long afterwards, in the beginning of 1848, the Colonial Office changed its mind for the second time, and determined upon the renewal of transportation to Van Diemen's Land. The joy of the colonists was converted into sorrow,—the more intense, in proportion as their hopes had been unnecessarily excited, and cruelly disappointed, by the vacillation of the Colonial Office.

Ignorance.

As a recent instance of ignorance on the part of the Colonial Office, I will remind the House of the case of Ceylon. In 1847, the present Secretary of State for the Colonies appointed a committee, consisting of the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies and other gentlemen of distinguished abilities, to investigate the financial condition of Ceylon, with the view of proposing measures to promote the economical prosperity of that colony. After much labour, those gentlemen drew up a report, which received the sanction of the Secretary of State of State for the Colonies. Now it has been proved in this House,—and no one will venture to contradict my statement,—that the chief data furnished by the Colonial Office, upon which that report was founded, were incorrect; that the most important conclusions to which the committee arrived, were erroneous; that they mistook liabilities for assets, a bankrupt exchequer for a full treasury, and a deficit for a surplus of income over expenditure; that, in consequence of these mistakes, they recommended a reduction of taxation when they should have recommended a reduction of expenditure; that the Secretary of State for the Colonies, not being better informed than his committee, adopted their recommendations, and instructed the governor of Ceylon to give effect to those recommendations. These instructions were obeyed by the unlucky governor,—a nobleman who had been appointed on account of his skill in agriculture and in railroad finance; but who was not better acquainted with the affairs of Ceylon than either the Secretary or Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies. The consequence was, financial embarrassment, which led to the imposition of taxes so injudicious, that, though they were approved of by the Colonial Office, within a year it was necessary to repeal them.

Censure on system, not on individuals.

I refer to these cases, not in order to impute blame to individuals, but to illustrate my position, that ignorance, negligence, and vacillation are vices inherent in our system of colonial government, by whomsoever administered. My object is to prove that our colonial polity works ill, and pro-

duces discontent and complaint in the colonies, not because it is specially mal-administered, but because it is an essentially faulty system, which cannot be well administered. It is difficult to censure a system without appearing to censure the persons connected with it. In order to overcome this difficulty, I declare that my object is not to censure any person. My motion may be considered to be a vote of censure on our colonial system, but it is not intended to be a vote of censure on the Secretary of State for the Colonies. For, in my judgment, the colonies have not been worse governed by the present Secretary of State for the Colonies, than by any one of his predecessors who have had equal opportunities of so doing. I know that a different opinion on this subject, prevails both in this country and in the colonies; that, in consequence of former speeches made by the present Colonial Minister, very exaggerated expectations were formed of what he would do when in office; that those exaggerated expectations have been disappointed; that that disappointment has been embittered by the injudicious praises of friends and subordinates; and that hence his name is most unpopular. But, in my opinion, it would be a great mistake to suppose that either his removal from office, or any mere change in the staff of the Colonial Office, would be of any real benefit to the colonies. The fault is in the system. The wonder to me, is, not that the system works ill; not that it produces discontent and complaint; but that it works no worse than it does. Consider, sir, for one moment, the nature of its working machinery. To govern our forty-three colonies, scattered over the face of the globe, inhabited by men differing in race, language, and religion, with various institutions, strange laws, and unknown customs, the staff of the Colonial-Office consists only of five superior and twenty-three inferior functionaries. The superior functionaries are, the Secretary of State, the two Under-Secretaries, the Assistant Under-Secretary, and the Chief Clerk. The Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary leave office with the Government, and rarely retain office for more than two years at a time: they are the ostensible heads of our Colonial system, and are responsible to Parliament for the government of the colonies. The three other superior functionaries being permanent, are the real heads of our Colonial system; they are screened from responsibility by the political functionaries; they are unknown to Parliament, scarcely known to the public by name, but have become celebrated of late years under the witty designation of Mr. Mother-country, applied to them by Mr. Charles Buller. Subordinate to these gentlemen, there are twenty-three clerks, making

Censure on system, not on Colonial Minister.

Machinery of Colonial-Office.

Mr. Mother-country.

in all twenty-eight persons for the government of forty-three colonies. Therefore, even with an equal division of labour, there would not be one official for the government of each colony. But no such division of labour is practicable. The Secretary of State for the Colonies is responsible to Parliament for the government of every colony. It is his duty, therefore, to be acquainted with the affairs of each of the forty-three colonies; to read and study every despatch, and to be prepared to answer, either in his own person, or by his Under-Secretary, every question which may be put to him, in either House of Parliament, with regard to the colonies. If he could divide his time equally between the colonies, as there are forty-three of them, he could give about a week a year to the affairs of each separate colony; but to no single colony could he at one time spare a week of continuous attention; for every colony, more or less, requires his attention simultaneously. At one time he can only give a few hours to one dependency, then a few hours to another, and so on, turn and turn about, traversing and retraversing, in his imagination, the terraqueous globe; flying from the Arctic to the Antarctic pole; hurrying from the snows of North America to the burning regions of the Tropics; rushing across from the fertile islands of the West Indies to the arid deserts of South Africa and Australia; like nothing on earth, or in romance, save the Wandering Jew. For instance, one day the Colonial Secretary is, in Ceylon, a financial and a religious reformer, promoting the interests of the coffee planter, and casting discredit on the tooth and religion of Buddha; the next day he is in the West Indies, teaching the economical manufacture of sugar; or in Van Diemen's Land, striving to reform the fiends whom he has transported to that pandemonium. Now he is in Canada, discussing the Indemnity Bill and the war of races; anon he is at the Cape of Good Hope, dancing a war dance with Sir Harry Smith and his Kafir subjects; or in New Zealand, an unsuccessful Lycurgus, coping with Honi Heki; or at Natal treating with Panda, king of the Zoolahs; or in Labuan, digging coal and warring with pirates; or in the midst of South Africa, defeating Pretorius and his rebel Boers; or in Vancouver's Island, done by the Hudson's Bay Company; or in Victoria, *alias* Port Philip, the chosen representative of the people; or in the Mauritius, building fortifications against a hostile population; or in the fair isles of the Ionian Sea, enjoying, I hope, for the sake of my dear friend Mr. Ward, a life of luxurious ease and perfect tranquillity. Thus the most incongruous events succeed each other, and are jumbled together

Duties of the Colonial Minister.

The Wandering Jew.

His occupations.

in the brain of the unfortunate Secretary of State for the Colonies, as in the wild dream of a fevered imagination; and ere the unhappy man has had time to settle one grave colonial question, another of equal importance presses on his wearied and worn-out attention. His occupations.

I repeat, that the wonder is, not that our system of colonial government works ill; but, that it works no worse than it does. I maintain, therefore, that that system requires revision. To ascertain in what manner it ought to be revised, how the machinery of the Colonial Office can be improved, and whether more local government and more self-government ought to be given to some or all of the colonies, should, in my opinion, be the first great subjects for the inquiry which I propose to the consideration of the House. In pursuing this inquiry, the commission should draw a broad distinction between those colonies which have or ought to have representative institutions, and those of the Crown colonies which are unfit for free institutions. Because the line of inquiry, the questions and the conclusions with regard to the best mode of governing the one class of colonies, will be very different from those with regard to the other class of colonies. In both cases, the more the government is local, the better I believe it will be. It will, therefore, be an important subject for inquiry by the Commission, what is the best form of local government for those Crown colonies which are unfit for free institutions. Questions with regard to colonial government.

The second head of inquiry which I propose for the Commission, is Colonial Expenditure. I have calculated that, on the average of the last fifteen years, the direct cost of the colonies to Great Britain, under the four heads of civil, naval, military, and extraordinary expenditure, has amounted to at least 4,000,000*l.* a year, exclusive of the sums paid for emancipating our slaves. The civil expenditure has been between 200,000*l.* and 300,000*l.* a year; the naval expenditure, I believe, I have under-estimated at 1,000,000*l.* a year. The military expenditure must have exceeded 2,500,000*l.* a year; and at least 200,000*l.* a year have been required, on the average of the last fifteen years, to cover the extraordinary expenses of Canadian rebellions, Kafir wars, etc. I believe that, with a reform of our Colonial system, and with a searching inquiry into the cost of our colonies, a large reduction could be made in colonial expenditure, especially in military expenditure. Colonial expenditure by Great Britain.

Last year the military force of the colonies consisted of forty-seven regiments of the line, nine colonial corps, one regiment of cavalry, thirty-eight companies of artillery, about Military force and expenditure.

Military force and expenditure.

800 sappers and miners, and about 100 engineer officers; in all about 45,000 men of all ranks. The cost of these troops for pay and commissariat expenses alone, has been returned to Parliament, for the five years ending 31st of March, 1847, at 9,742,000*l.*, and at the rate of 1,948,000*l.* a year, exclusive of ordnance or other expenditure. These troops are scattered about in various stations, over thirty-seven colonies. In the ordnance estimates of this year, reference is made to fifty-four military stations, in which there are either barrack or ordnance establishments, generally both, with barrack-masters, barrack-sergeants, storekeepers, deputy-storekeepers, clerks of the works, &c. This year the sum of 197,000*l.* is required for the salaries of the officers and the wages of the workmen belonging to these establishments. The storehouses of these stations contain stores of the estimated value of 2,500,000*l.*, a sufficient amount of stores, if they do not perish of themselves, for about twenty years' consumption during peace.

Stores.

Ordnance works.

In most of these stations, considerable sums have been annually expended on fortifications and other ordnance works. The sum required for these purposes in the estimates of this year is 216,000*l.*; and the total sum expended upon them in the course of the nineteen years from 1829 to 1847 has amounted to 3,500,000*l.* For instance, during that period we have expended in North America on ordnance works, at Kingston, 342,000*l.*; at Quebec, 330,000*l.*; at Montreal, 186,000*l.*; at Toronto, 65,000*l.*; at the Rideau canal, 67,000*l.*; at Halifax, 215,000*l.*; in Newfoundland, New Brunswick, &c., about 100,000*l.*: making in all about 1,300,000*l.* spent on ordnance works in North America within the last nineteen years. Many of these works are uncompleted, and to complete them large sums of money will still be required; for instance, at Kingston, 140,000*l.* Much of this expenditure has, I believe, been unnecessary; some of it absurdly so. For instance, in 1846 an estimate was presented to Parliament by the late Government for certain ordnance works in Canada. Those works were supposed to be wanted because the dispute with America concerning the Oregon was not settled. However, before the estimate was voted, the late Government left office, and its last act was to announce the settlement of the Oregon question. The present Government adopted the estimates of their predecessors; they never thought of examining those estimates, but passed them in a heap, military works in Canada included. The money being voted was spent; and after it was spent it was discovered that the works had been commenced after the reason for

North America.

Money thrown away.

commencing them had ceased; that is, the works supposed to be required because the Oregon question was not settled, were commenced after the Oregon question was settled. The money so thrown away has amounted, I believe to about 90,000*l.* It is lucky that a larger sum was not expended, for I can discover no existing check upon this expenditure. Money thrown away.

In the West Indies 601,000*l.* have been expended on ordnance works in the interval between 1829 and 1847. During the same period 313,000*l.* have been expended for similar purposes at Malta and Gibraltar, and it was estimated that a further sum of 250,000*l.* would be required to complete the ordnance works in progress in those colonies. During the same period we have expended in Bermuda 183,000*l.* on ordnance works; to complete them another 100,000*l.* will be required. I understand, however, on good authority, that the introduction of steam has made these works of little value for purposes of defence; and to defend those works it is said that a flotilla, composed of small steamers drawing little water will be required. West Indies. Malta. Gibraltar. Bermuda.

Before I proceed to the Mauritius, I must observe, that, according to the highest authorities, our colonies should be divided into two classes with reference to military works; the one class consisting of colonies conquered from the French, Dutch, and other nations; and the other class consisting of colonies planted by our own people. The latter may at times be very much dissatisfied with Colonial-Office government, but being inhabited by Englishmen, they always prefer our dominion to that of a foreign nation. Therefore, in the event of a war, they may be safely intrusted with their own defence. For instance, troops and military works are not required in Australia: it is true that a hostile power might destroy Sydney, burn Melbourne, and commit other acts of vandalism, but it could never keep permanent possession of New South Wales, or Victoria, against its English inhabitants. On the contrary, in our conquered colonies we cannot trust the population; and in those colonies troops or military works are required more against our own hostile subjects than against foreign enemies. This is said, on high authority, to be the case of the Mauritius. It is said that in the event of a war, if Port Louis were not well fortified, it would be difficult for us to retain possession of it; and if we were to lose it, it would be difficult for us to regain possession of it; in both cases for the same reason, because an influential portion of the population are hostile to us. Now, it is said that the Mauritius is an important military station, that in the last war, before we took possession of it, prizes of the value of 7,000,000*l.* were Two classes of colonies. Australia. Mauritius.

Mauritius.

carried into it. Hence the supposed necessity for extensive ordnance works in that island, both on the seaside against foreign enemies, and on the land side against domestic foes. On those works above 200,000*l.* have been expended since 1829. To complete the defences on the side of the sea at least 200,000*l.* more will be required, exclusive of the cost of the land defences. However, it is proposed to expend only 5,000*l.* a-year on these works; therefore, at least forty years will elapse before they can be completed! May we be at peace and never require the use of them till they are finished!

Ionian Islands.

In the Ionian Islands nearly half a million has been expended on ordnance works since the peace. The case of the Ionian Islands is a capital instance of the manner in which public money has been thrown away upon worthless colonies, on the absurdest pleas. In 1815 the great Powers of Europe, not knowing what to do with the free and independent States of the Ionian Islands, placed them under the protection of Great Britain. Lord Lansdowne and other distinguished statesmen remonstrated, on the grounds that such possessions would be burdensome, expensive, and of no use; but Lord Bathurst maintained that they would be most valuable; that the country would gain immensely by them; and that they would defray all expenses incurred on their account. On such nonsensical pleas our colonial empire was extended. What, however, have been the facts? Our export trade to the Ionian Islands has not, on the average of the last ten years, exceeded 122,000*l.* a year; and the Ionian States have been wholly unable to fulfil their pecuniary engagements to this country. They have cost us 130,000*l.* a year on the average, or about 4,500,000*l.* since the peace. We have

Works at Corfu.

built fortifications at Corfu, the original estimate for which, as sanctioned by the Duke of Wellington in 1824, was 182,000*l.*; this estimate was increased in 1831 to 227,000*l.*, in 1834 to 240,000*l.*, in 1839 to 340,000*l.*; that sum having been expended, we voted last year 12,873*l.*; we are to vote this year 9,206*l.* for these same works; then to complete them at least 50,000*l.* more will be required; and when these works, originally estimated to cost 182,000*l.*, shall be completed, at a cost of above 400,000*l.*, they will be so extensive, that in the event of a serious war it would hardly be expedient to spare forces sufficient to man them; and the wisest plan would be to blow up the fortifications, to abandon the islands, and to concentrate our forces at Malta and Gibraltar. For as long as we retain the supremacy of the ocean, we could always reconquer them for a trifle, provided there be no fortifications to resist us; and were we to lose the supremacy of

the ocean, with the best fortifications, we could only keep possession of them for a few months.

In South Africa we spent, between 1829 and 1847, 271,000*l.* on ordnance works. A considerable portion of this sum has been expended on the eastern frontier of the colony of the Cape of Good Hope, in bridges over unknown rivers, and various works, offensive and defensive, against the Kafirs. Our ordnance expenditure in South Africa is, however, only commencing. For we have lately advanced our eastern frontier, and taken military possession of a portion of Kafraria. If, in addition to this, we are to defend the frontier of Natal, against the Kafirs on one side, and the Zoolahs on the other; if military stations are to be established in the interior among the insurgent Boers; if our newly-acquired frontier on the Yellow River is to be guarded against the Bechuana tribes of Central Africa; then, in future years, large sums will be required for ordnance works, our military force must be greatly augmented, and our expenditure on account of South Africa will probably be increased from 300,000*l.* a-year to twice that sum or more. The Kafir war which has just terminated is a sample of what we may expect frequently to happen in our South African dominions. By the time all the bills are paid, that war will probably have cost us a couple of millions sterling. How has this money been expended? Nobody knows, or rather, nobody seems inclined to tell. A very curious return has been lately presented to the House on this subject. It is an answer from the Commissioners of Audit to a letter from the Treasury, in which the Commissioners are directed to report upon the expenditure occasioned by the late Kafir war. In reply they state that they can do nothing of the kind, for no accounts have been furnished to them. In fact, it appears that no accounts have been kept, and that the persons whose duty it was to keep the accounts neglected their duty, and disregarded the orders both of the Treasury and of the Colonial-Office. All that is certain is, that our money has been spent. There can be little doubt that Sir H. Pottinger was right in suspecting the existence of gross peculation. And Sir H. Smith has assured us that many persons have amassed large sums of money by the late war; that there is a redundancy of money at the Cape, with general prosperity and a tendency to over speculation. In fact, a Kafir war is a Godsend to the inhabitants of the Cape, and I believe they pray for it as a means of extracting money out of the pockets of the wise men of England. And if it be our sovereign will and pleasure that Sir Harry Smith shall proclaim himself paramount chief of Kafraria, with strange

South Africa.

Last Kafir war.

No accounts kept.

rites and wonderful discourses; if he is to add desert after desert to our barren empire in South Africa, till it become as large as the whole of the Austrian dominions; if he is to cross the deserts which are the natural boundaries of the colony of the Cape, and to acquire a new frontier as long as from here to Naples, exposed, for many hundred miles, to the ravages of fierce, warlike, and rapacious barbarians; if he is to hunt across the plains of Central Africa, the Boers, ever flying from our hated dominion,—why the people of Great Britain must make up their minds to pay dearly for their whistle; and a more worthless one has never been acquired by force of British arms.

Insane desire of empire.

Thus, actuated by an insane desire of worthless empire, into every nook of our colonial universe we thrust an officer with a few soldiers; in every hole and corner we erect a fortification, build a barrack, or cram a store-house full of perishable stores,—and for what purposes? Because the military and naval sages, who are authority in these matters, maintain that we ought to be always prepared for war. In the opinion of those philosophers, the natural state of the civilized man is an universal war of nations; therefore, in anticipation of their coming millennium of perpetual strife, they demand that Great Britain should, regardless of expense, be ready on every point, at every moment, to combat with every one for the whole of her vast colonial domain. It has been said over and over again, without as well as within this House, by the noble lord, the Prime Minister, and others, that we have inherited from our ancestors numerous colonies, which it is our interest, our duty, and our policy, to maintain and defend: for that Great Britain without her colonies, would in size be but a petty kingdom; but that, with her colonies, she has, in extent of surface, the semblance of an enormous empire. And it is said, that this semblance of enormous empire, arising from a vast colonial domain, overawes foreign nations, impresses them with a prestige of our might, causes the name of England to be a real and a mighty power, converts the mere sound of that name into a force greater than that of numerous fleets and costly armies; and thence it is argued, that colonies are the cheapest and most politic means of maintaining our position amongst the nations of the earth. This argument is well known by the name of the "prestige of might" argument. It has formed the staple of every speech in which the noble lord the Prime Minister has replied to every proposal for a reduction of our colonial and military expenditure. What is the value of this argument? It reminds me somewhat of the old fable of the animal who clothed himself with the skin of the

"Prestige of might" argument.

lion, and fancied that then the rest of the brute creation would mistake him for their natural king. Now, according to the "prestige of might" argument, our colonial empire is our lion's skin. Does it augment our strength for the combat? Certainly not. In the event of a serious struggle with a power of nearly equal force, our colonies would be a serious incumbrance. To defend them, we should have to scatter our forces over the face of the earth; and, contrary to every sound principle of warfare, we should run the risk of being destroyed in detail. In the event of such a conflict, the wisest plan would be, to withdraw our troops, to recall our fleets, and to concentrate our forces; in short, to disencumber ourselves of our lion's skin, to take it up again when the combat is over. But the argument is, that the fear of the sham lion would prevent the combat from ever taking place. So thought the animal in the fable, presuming upon the ignorance of his fellow-beasts, and wofully was he mistaken. Now does any one fancy that in these days we can impose upon mankind by such a sham; that we can, for instance, persuade the statesmen of Europe that, by acquiring an empire in South Africa as large as the Austrian dominions, we have added the might of old Austria to that of Great Britain? On the contrary, those statesmen will be much more likely to fancy that there are young Hungaries springing up both in Canada and in the land of the Boers. Therefore this "prestige of might" argument should rather be termed the "sham-lion" fallacy. And a dangerous fallacy it has been; for it has many times led us to commit the great and costly mistake of trusting more to military force than to good government, for the maintenance of our colonial empire.

"Prestige of might" argument.

"Sham-lion" fallacy.

Now it appears to me, that if the commission which I propose, should be appointed, it should inquire to what extent it is necessary or politic for us to keep troops, or build fortifications, in our colonies; whether we ought to do so in any colonies, except in our strictly military stations; what colonies should be considered to be military stations; and what is the best mode of checking and controlling our huge ordnance expenditure in the colonies, which, at the present moment, is without check or control. This inquiry appears to me a very important one; for I feel persuaded that, without a very considerable reduction in the military and naval expenditure on account of the colonies, no considerable reduction can be made in the cost of the colonies; or, in fact, in the general expenditure of the British empire.

Questions with regard to military expenditure.

I also think that if a commission be appointed, in addition to inquiring into the cost of the colonies to Great Britian, it

Expenditure by colonies.

Expenditure by colonies.

might with some advantage inquire into the cost of colonial government to the colonies themselves. On a former occasion I attempted to prove to the House that in those colonies which have a greater amount of self-government, the rate of expenditure per head of the population is generally less than in those colonies which have a less amount of self-government; and I inferred that this difference in the rate of expenditure arose from the difference in the amount of self-government. If this inference be correct, it follows that the best mode of ensuring a wise economy in the colonies, is by giving them greater control over their own finances. Government from a distance is apt, from ignorance, not only to be lavish in expenditure when it ought to be economical, but also to be niggardly when it ought to be generous. It would not be difficult to adduce various instances of niggardliness, in which the Colonial Office, not understanding the importance of a particular expenditure to a colony, has withheld its sanction to that expenditure to the detriment of the colony. Such cases are, however, rare, as compared to those of lavish expenditure, of which the colonial civil lists have generally been striking instances. As those civil lists have chiefly had reference to functionaries who have been sent out from this country, their salaries have generally been fixed rather with reference to the standard of wealth in this country than in the colonies; for instance, the salaries of governors. There are eighteen British colonies which pay for their own governors; their salaries amount in all to 72,000*l.* a year; therefore the average is 4,000*l.* a year, or nearly nine times the average salary of a governor in the United States. In fact, the total amount of the salaries of the thirty governors of the thirty states of the union is less by 2,500*l.* a year than the total amount of the salaries of the four governors of the British North American provinces of Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland. Therefore there is a general opinion in the colonies that the salaries fixed by the civil lists are excessive; and those civil lists have been subjects of perpetual dispute between the colonies and the Colonial Office.

Colonial civil lists.

Questions with regard to civil lists.

Now, it appears to me that it would be a question for the consideration of the commission, whether all or some of the colonies, which pay for their governors, should not be permitted to elect their own governors, and to determine the amount of their salaries; or, on the other hand, if it be deemed expedient that all the governors should be appointed by the Imperial Government, whether they ought not to be paid out of Imperial funds? In those colonies which have, or ought to have, free institutions, the representatives of the people

are the best guardians of the public purse. But in those Crown colonies which are unfit for free constitutions, it would be for the commission to ascertain what checks exist, or ought to exist, against lavish expenditure.

Emigration.

Lastly, I propose that if a commission be appointed, it should inquire into the subject of emigration and colonization. It would be easy to shew that the colonial policy of this country has not directly tended to encourage any emigration except that of convicts, and that by encouraging convict emigration, it has indirectly tended to discourage the best kinds of emigration; for no good and respectable man, especially if he be the father of a family, or intend to be one, would ever think of going to a convict colony, unless he be in complete ignorance of the moral consequences of convict colonization.

Convict emigration.

Therefore it is of the utmost importance to the colonies that the question should be settled, whether convict emigration is or is not to continue to be a portion of the colonial polity of the British empire. There can be no doubt that convict emigration is a good thing for the people of Great Britain; it saves them much money, much time, and much trouble in punishing over and over again the same criminals. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that it is a bad thing for the people of the colonies; it increases (in some instances it creates) their criminal population, and augments the amount of their penal expenditure; it is offensive to the feelings of the better portion of the colonists, and injurious to the character of all of them; and though some of them may consent to it for the sake of pecuniary gain, yet that consent is a proof of moral degradation, likely to be increased and rendered permanent by contact with criminals. The question, therefore, is, whether the benefit to Great Britain from convict emigration so far exceeds the injury to the colonies, that the empire as a whole is a gainer thereby.

Benefit to Great Britain.

Now the benefit to Great Britain consists primarily in getting rid of its criminals; they are a very great nuisance here; they constitute a dangerous class; in former times they were got rid of by the simple process of hanging; when hanging became disgusting, then transportation was adopted by the humane people of England as the easiest mode of ridding themselves of their criminals, without shocking their sensibilities. It is evident, therefore, that the benefit to Great Britain from convict emigration, is in direct proportion to the number and wickedness of the criminals exported.

Evil to the colonies.

On the other hand, it is equally evident that the evil to the colonies from convict immigration, is also in direct proportion to the number and wickedness of the criminals imported. Therefore the gain to the one is

Evil to the colonies.

equivalent in amount to the loss to the other; and the result to the empire as a whole, is an expensive shifting of the burden of crime. Now, if Great Britain be entitled to transfer its criminals to the colonies, if that transfer be for the benefit of the whole empire, then it is evident that every one of the colonies should be required to make the same sacrifice for the public good by receiving convict immigrants. Accordingly a considerable change has been lately proposed and attempted to be made in the distribution of convicts in the

Old system.

colonies. Under the old system of distribution, the moral filth of Great Britain was accumulated in vast and fermenting masses in the penal colonies, whence moral typhus, plague, pestilence, and all manner of hideous disease; and the British pest-houses of Australia stunk in the nostrils of mankind.

New system.

Under the present system of distribution, that filth is to be spread out evenly over the surface of the colonies, and the colonists are to be told that it will be a fertilizing manure, which will increase their material wealth and prosperity. To the old system it is impossible to return. The new system, I believe, contains within itself the germs of sure and speedy decay. For it was admitted in the case of the colony of the Cape of Good Hope (thanks to the exertions of the honourable gentleman the member for North Staffordshire), that convicts are not to be sent to any colony which protests with sufficient energy against convict emigration. The example of the Cape of Good Hope is being followed by New Zealand and Van Diemen's Land, and will be followed by all our other colonies; for, in proportion as they acquire wealth and their population increases, they will feel more acutely the stigma which justly attaches to them as convict colonies, and

Cannot continue.

will spare no effort to remove that stigma. Therefore, I believe that convict emigration cannot have a permanent existence as a portion of the colonial polity of Great Britain. May it not continue in existence so long as to engender such feelings of hatred and discontent as might tend to subvert our colonial empire! On a former occasion the noble lord the Prime Minister thought proper most unjustly to accuse me of a wish to get rid of our colonial empire. He described that empire as a glorious inheritance which we had received from our ancestors, and declared that he was determined, at all risks, to maintain it for ever intact. Now, I ask him, how do we treat that precious inheritance? By transportation we stock it with convicts; we convert it into the moral dung-heap of Great Britain; and we tell our colonists that thieves and felons are fit to be their associates. Is this the mode and manner to inspire the inhabitants of our colonies

with those feelings of affection and esteem for the mother country, without which our colonial empire must speedily crumble in the dust, notwithstanding our numerous garrisons? Now, if the magniloquent words of the noble lord were not mere empty vauntings, to raise a cheer and gain a momentary triumph in a debate; if the noble lord be sincere and earnest, as I am, in the wish to maintain that empire intact, and to hand it down great and prosperous to posterity, he will cordially unite with me in the effort to put an end to convict emigration. I maintain that we have no moral right to relieve ourselves of our criminals at the expense of the colonies, and that the desire to make a scapegoat of our colonies, by whomsoever entertained, whether by members of this house or by magistrates of quarter-sessions, or by judges on the bench, is a mean and selfish feeling, of which, as citizens of this great empire, we ought to be heartily ashamed. Ought not to continue.

With reference to Free Emigration, I do not recommend that the commission, if it be appointed, should inquire into the expediency or practicability of the great schemes of emigration or colonization which have been lately proposed, with a view of relieving the economical difficulties of the United Kingdom. I recommend that the inquiry should be confined to ascertaining the nature of the obstacles which stand in the way of individual enterprise in colonizing, and which impede emigration to the colonies. The existence of such obstacles will be acknowledged by every one who is conversant with the history of the attempts which have been made of late years to found colonies in Australia and New Zealand. Having been concerned in one of those attempts, experience has satisfied me that under our present system of colonial government, no gentleman, no man of birth or education, ought to think of emigrating to any one of the British dependencies. I feel satisfied that if our colonial system continue unreformed, the better class of emigrants who wish to seek their fortunes in a new world, where there is less competition, and a more open field for youthful energy and enterprise, will be more and more apt to direct their steps to the United States of America, where they will enjoy institutions and self-government of English origin, and will not be liable to have their prospects marred by the ignorant and capricious interference of distant and irresponsible authorities, or of their ill-selected instruments. Within the last five-and-twenty years, as I have already said, about two millions of persons have emigrated from this country. One million have gone directly to the United States of America; about 800,000 to our North American colonies, of the latter more Free emigration. Obstacles to. Independent colonies preferred.

Independent colonies preferred.

than one-half have re-emigrated to the United States. Therefore, in all probability, three-fourths of the emigration from this country during the last five-and-twenty years has been to the United States (in fact, last year three-fourths of the emigrants from this country, 188,000 out of 248,000, went directly to the United States). It is not improbable, therefore, that the number of persons now living in the United States, who were born British subjects, is as great as the whole number of persons of British and Irish descent in all our dependencies. I ask, why do emigrants prefer the United States to the British colonies? I ask this question not from any feelings of jealousy of the United States. I look upon those states as the greatest, the most glorious, and most useful children of England; for their inhabitants I entertain the strongest regard and affection; I rejoice that we are assisting them in peopling their far west; I rejoice at everything which promotes their interests and redounds to their honour; I believe these feelings are entertained and returned by the instructed and reflecting men of both countries; I believe that trade, emigration, and similarity of institutions are daily strengthening the ties between Great Britain and her independent colonies; thence I augur the happiest consequences to our race. And in the same manner as I might ask why emigrants prefer one British colony to another, so I do ask what turns the tide of emigration from our dependent to our independent colonies? I answer, Colonial-Office government, convict emigration, and other causes, which a commission would be able to ascertain and point out to the House.

Why?

I have now stated what, in my opinion, should be the three chief heads of inquiry by a commission, namely: colonial government, colonial expenditure, and emigration or colonization. Under each of these heads, the commission should inquire what questions should be considered as imperial ones, and what questions should be looked upon as local ones. It should attempt to ascertain what powers the Imperial Government ought to reserve for the benefit of the empire at large, and what powers ought to be delegated to the colonial legislatures. It appears to me that it would not be difficult to classify and define the powers which ought to be reserved as imperial ones; and then all other powers not so reserved, should be held to be local powers. The advantages of such a classification, if sanctioned by the Imperial Legislature, are self-evident. It would enable the colonial legislatures to know precisely what they are entitled to do, and what they must abstain from doing. It would thus greatly diminish the chance of hostile collision between those legislatures and the

Distinction between imperial and local powers.

Imperial Government; and last, and not least, it would spare us many a useless debate about colonial questions with which it is impossible for us to be well acquainted.

Summary of reasons for inquiry.

I have now assigned my chief reasons for the motion which I have proposed. I have shown that there is a growing conviction in this country, and an intense conviction in the colonies, that there are grave errors and defects in the colonial polity of the British empire. I have thence inferred that that polity requires revision. For the purpose of revision, I have asked that a searching inquiry should be instituted; first, into our system of colonial government, with the view of removing the causes of colonial discontent and complaint; secondly, into colonial expenditure, with a view of diminishing the cost of the colonies; and thirdly, into the subjects of emigration and colonization, with a view of affording free scope for individual enterprise in the business of colonization, and of removing the obstacles which stand in the way of emigration to our dependencies.

Questions to be settled.

If this inquiry be properly conducted, it will furnish the means of settling the great practical questions of colonial government; for instance, what colonies ought to have free institutions; what is the best form of self-government for colonies with representative institutions; what is the best kind of local government for colonies unfit for self-government; what defences are needed for what colonies; what should be the nature and amount of imperial expenditure for the colonies; what would be the best checks both on imperial and local expenditure in the colonies; to what colonies, convict emigration, if not abolished, would be least mischievous; for what colonies free emigration, and of what kind, would be most beneficial; what rules should be adopted for the disposal of colonial lands, and by whom those rules should be framed; and lastly, with regard to the settlement of all these questions, and of many others of equal importance to the colonies, and with reference to each class of colonies separately, what powers should be reserved to the Imperial Government, and what powers should be delegated to the local authorities?

Importance of settling them.

I am convinced that upon the practical settlement of these questions the maintenance of our colonial empire mainly depends. I believe that the stability of that empire is in imminent danger from their non-settlement; first, in consequence of the colonial discontent engendered thereby; secondly, in consequence of the opinion, which I am sorry to say is thence gaining ground in this country, that these colonial questions are insoluble; therefore that good colonial government is impossible; therefore, that colonies are nuisances and burdens; and there-

Importance of settling them.

fore, the fewer they are in number, and the sooner they are got rid of, the better. I lament the growth of these opinions. I am satisfied they will spread and acquire strength in proportion as the settlement of the questions to which I have referred is delayed. To settle those questions without inquiry and assistance Parliament is at present utterly incompetent. The experience of this session has shown that a debate on a colonial question is confusion worse confounded, wherein scarcely any two speakers agree; the few listeners are puzzled by the conflicting opinions of pretended authorities; and the house, in utter despair of understanding the subject, generally gives a reluctant and distrustful vote of confidence in the Colonial-office. The results of that confidence I have displayed to the house, in the shape of wars, rebellions, recurring distress, perpetual discontent, and enormous expenditure; the necessary consequences of the ignorance, negligence, and vacillation, which I have shown to be inseparable from our system of colonial government. Not as a cure for these evils, but as the necessary preliminary step towards a cure, I ask for the inquiry, the nature of which I have just described.

By whom should the inquiry be conducted?

It is evident that the good to be obtained from an inquiry will depend upon the manner in which it is conducted, and the persons to whom it is entrusted. On a former occasion the honourable gentleman the member for Berwickshire proposed that a similar inquiry should be conducted by a committee of this house. Though I voted for his motion, I was compelled to acknowledge that the inquiry would be too vast and too complicated for a committee. I voted for his motion because I felt satisfied that, if a committee were appointed, it would soon discover its inability to perform its allotted task, and would recommend that the inquiry should be conducted in the manner which I now propose, that is, by

By a royal commission.

a royal commission. If the house should accede to my motion, and her Majesty should be graciously pleased to appoint a commission, I should presume to recommend that it should consist of not more than five persons; that the commission should report from time to time to her Majesty; that their reports should be laid before Parliament; and if approved of by Parliament they should be the bases of colonial legislation, and of a reform of our colonial polity. The task which the commission would have to perform would be an arduous as well as an important one. The question will be asked, to whom should the performance of such a task be entrusted? what should be the qualifications of the members of such a

commission? It may, perhaps, be maintained that the inquiry which I propose should be conducted by the department to which the management of our colonial affairs is entrusted. And if the inquiry were to be merely into the details of colonial administration, into the machinery of the Colonial Office, into the number of functionaries which are required in that office, and into the best division of labour between them, I might then admit that such an inquiry might be left to the management of the Colonial Office. But the inquiry which I propose is a much more extensive one, namely, into the whole colonial polity of the British Empire. Now, first, the functionaries of the Colonial Office are too much occupied with the daily administration of colonial affairs to be able to spare time for so extensive an inquiry as that which I contemplate. And, secondly, I must say, without any intentional disrespect for those gentlemen, that having been accustomed to the existing system, they would, in my opinion, be apt to look upon that system with too favourable an eye. Therefore I object to entrusting this inquiry to the Colonial Office. To whom then should this inquiry be entrusted? It is evident that it ought not to be conducted in a party spirit; and, in fact, it is not a party question; for each party is equally interested in the good government of the colonies, in the reduction of unnecessary Colonial expenditure, in the promotion of Colonization and Emigration, and in short in everything which can conduce to the prosperity of our Colonial empire, and to the happiness of our Colonial fellow-subjects. Therefore, if a Commission be appointed, I should recommend that it be fairly chosen from the four divisions of this House: for example, one member should be appointed from the ministerial benches,—such a person, for instance, as my honourable friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department; one member from amongst the friends of the right honourable baronet the member for Tamworth,—as, for instance, either the right honourable baronet the member for Ripon, or the right honourable gentleman the member for the University of Oxford, or the noble lord the member for Falkirk; one member from the ranks of the Protectionist party; and one from the section of the House to which I belong. To the four members so selected, I would recommend that there should be added one of our most distinguished economical and political writers,—such, for instance, as Mr. John Stewart Mill. I think a Commission so constituted, with full powers of inquiry, would deserve and obtain the confidence both of this country and of the colonies, and would lead to the most important results.

By a royal commission.

Chosen from the four divisions of the House.

Conclusion. I hope that I have succeeded in giving the house a clear notion of what is the object of my motion, and that I have satisfied the house that I am actuated by the desire of promoting the well-being of the colonial empire. In conclusion, I must beg the house to observe, that by agreeing to my motion, the house will not pledge itself to any specific principles of colonial polity, or to any positive legislation, but only to the position that there ought to be a searching inquiry into our system of colonial administration. Can any one deny that such an inquiry is desirable, and that it may produce great benefits both to Great Britain and the colonies? Therefore, in the firm conviction that my motion is both a practical and a useful one, worthy of the consideration and approval of

Motion. the house; I now beg leave to move that an humble address be presented to her Majesty, praying that her Majesty will be graciously pleased to appoint a commission to inquire into the administration of her Majesty's colonial possessions, with the view of removing the causes of colonial complaint, diminishing the cost of colonial government, and giving free scope to individual enterprise in the business of colonizing.

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